

"To promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which inhere in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

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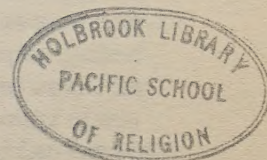
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## CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

### *Responsibility of the Church for the Community and the Social Order*

By Thomas Jesse Jones\*



The purpose of this interpretation of human society is to indicate in simple terms the basic essentials which should be the vital concern of all social organizations and especially of the Christian Church. It is hoped that they are formulated in the spirit of the Master who came to give life more abundantly—a cup of cold water, the common things of the common day to every man, woman and child. It is also hoped that they are in harmony with the wise observation of the late Justice Holmes who said: "The vindication of the obvious is often more important than the elucidation of the obscure." More recently Mr. Newton Baker has aptly applied this thought to some present disturbing trends when he said:

"The new school of mass behaviorists are always searching for the remote and hidden cause. They discard the obvious as unreasonable and embrace the unreasonable because it is not obvious."

#### I

#### Definition of Community

Community is an aggregation of individuals, families and social organizations whose social unity is determined by contiguity of residence and by mutual dependence for the necessities of life.

It is important to note that the environment or neighborhood, determined by contiguity or mutual interest, as defined above, may include not only those in adjacent areas but also those in distant regions. The interdependence of urban and rural peoples should be clearly recognized. City dwellers are too generally ignorant of their dependence upon those who cultivate the soil and care for the animals necessary to the food and milk supply. There is also the dependence of both urban and rural peoples upon commerce, manufactures, and mines. Community of interests has thus become intensive and extensive. The amazing and even startling congestion of peoples in ever enlarging cities and the remarkable development of travel, transportation, and communication have brought institutions and peoples together who are strangers to each other and ignorant of their interdependence.

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II

Essentials of Community in Primitive Society

In order to avoid the baffling intricacies and artificialities of modern society, and especially of urban communities, it seems necessary to formulate the approach to this analysis of a community on the basis of the elements of a primitive society. Of the numerous elements susceptible of study even in a tribal village, there are four of such vital and obvious importance as to merit the rank of "essentials" of human society, whether primitive or civilized:

I - As we visit village after village and tribe after tribe in many parts of Africa, we notice great differences in their physical condition. Some are weak and anaemic from the saturation of their blood by malaria germs; some sections are being depopulated by the subtle inroads of sleeping sickness; some are subjected to alternate experience of famine and plenty; some seem to be physically sunk in sensual indulgence stimulated by ceremonialism and fetishtic rites. Other tribes are physically vigorous. Climate and soil are favorable to health. Thrift and skill conserve the food resources. Tribal rules and ceremony encourage and require physical stamina. The primacy of health and sanitation is more and more realized until finally we conclude that physical welfare is the first essential of tribal life and probably of civilization as well.

II - But the revelation of the elemental importance of health has introduced us to other forces and conditions inextricably involved in the recognition of physical well-being. Climate, soil, thrift, skill, heredity, and ceremonialism have already appeared as the conditions of existence, muscular energy, and physical buoyancy. In the interdependence of the social factors, what is the second essential to be distinguished from the seemingly unified action of tribe and community? An inventory of the traveller's impressions shows clearly the most immediate and intimate dependency of life on the ability of the tribe to understand and to use the resources of the environment. Varying degrees of skill in the handling of the soil, the wood, the water, and the animal life are everywhere evident. Herein is the parting of the ways between famine and food, exposure to the weather and protection from climatic perils, poverty and wealth, economic dependence and independence. The differentiation proceeds naturally and inexorably from people who are weak and futile to those who are strong and capable.

Nor can we omit from environmental forces the relationships to neighbors--individual, tribal, and inter-tribal. So intimate are the influences of physical resources and the humanity all about as to compel their discussion under one head. It matters not how much food is available in one tribe, if a stronger neighboring tribe desires it, the resources are lost. This is the elemental law which must be obeyed or modified by new conceptions and attitudes in neighborly relationships. "How to make a living" and "Who is my neighbor" are at bottom both drastically materialistic questions. From these beginnings environmental relationships may proceed to all possible levels of cooperation, philanthropic and spiritual. The second essential of tribal existence seems, therefore, to be the power of integration with the environment, material and human.

III - Though health and environment have been segregated from the numerous influences that underlie even the simplicity of tribal life, it is obvious that there are other constants of such outstanding importance as to require segregation. Reference has been made to heredity. The tribe is a going concern. It lives on from generation to generation. What are the agencies primarily concerned with the transfer of the heritage of the tribe and the race to the oncoming generation? In a sense every act, every individual, every organization is responsible for this

Equally bad and possibly worse is the adoption of some social shibboleth or fanatical panacea as the basis of a survey. To acquire a comprehensive consciousness of community demands scientific inquiries as carefully planned and as searching as those of a medical diagnosis. In fact, there is no better analogy of a sound social survey than that of the first class physician who bases his observations of any part of the human body upon a thorough diagnosis of the whole physique and, indeed, upon an understanding of the environment of the individual whose ailment is being considered.

"Why civilization?" is answered not in the realization of any one essential nor in the smooth working of divergent organizations. Effective and permanent civilization must be based on the realization of the essentials through the available organizations of society. Whether it is the Occident or the Orient that is on trial, the answers are to be found in the sincerity of their interest in health, environment, heritage, and re-creation. The piling up of resources, the ingenuity of machinery, the extent of controls, the magnitude of power are not sufficient. High-sounding philosophies, the ecstasies of emotion, the placid contemplation of mysticism, and passive consciousness of the beautiful, the good, the divine will not avail. Faith without works is dead; and work without faith is equally futile. The way to peace is far more comprehensive and drastic in its requirements than the eloquent advocacies of peace societies. Even the remarkable achievements of the League of Nations are only beginnings. The way to peace--national, international, and intercontinental--is in the realization of the essentials of life for all the people in all parts of the world.

## V

### Religious Organizations and the Essentials

The ultimate test of Christianity is the degree of its success in the European and American continents where the Christian churches are most numerous. Attitudes towards Christianity and its achievements in Asia and Africa are most significant, but the most searching tests are those of general social conditions in Europe and the Americas. It is said, and it seems true, that the greatest hindrances to the Christian religion in the Orient and in Africa are the failures of the churches in the Occident. However mistaken Oriental and African leaders may be as to the extent and character of religious failures and futilities in the West, it must be admitted that the Christian churches are not exerting influences worthy of the Great Teacher who taught us to "do unto others as we would that others should do unto us," who gave humanity the Beatitudes, and who announced the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Christian civilization has not yet realized the meaning of St. Paul's message to health workers: "Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit?" European and American industries are only beginning to distinguish between "making a living" and "making a life." "Ye are laborers together with God, ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's buildings," needs to be understood today in the United States and Canada, in Great Britain and in all Europe, even as it was needed in Corinth of old. "Who is my neighbor?" needs still to be asked in the Occident. Rampant racial, religious and national prejudices prove the incident of the "Road to Jericho" to be possible today in many reprehensible forms. The answers proposed are too frequently only in the realm of idealistic theory or in the futilities of emotional slogans. The responsibilities of homes for the social heritage are gradually being recognized, and the rights of womanhood and childhood are better conserved in Europe and America than anywhere else in the world, but the ideals of civilization and Christianity for heritage and homes are yet far from realization. The hectic, rushing life of Occidental civilization seems a long way from the recreation, the culture, the faith of that religion whose Founder still invites all people everywhere,

Modern society is prone to the sin of over-specialization. Indeed it appears at times that this is the cardinal sin and the real menace to a sound appreciation of what matters in life. The baffling intricacies and perplexities of the modern city seem likely to be the tower of Babel that will confound and destroy the elements of true progress. The elements herein commended as four essentials have been selected with these facts in mind. The conventional divisions of philosophy, sociology, and economics have been seriously considered, but they have not been permitted to over-emphasize the differences to the disregard of the likenesses. The emphasis has been rather on the similarities, the identities, and certainly on the interdependence of social factors.

Our synthetic approach to civilization has thus revealed "four community essentials" that are interwoven through practically every form of human society. Health, environment, heritage, and re-creation are obviously large, comprehensive units each including many smaller units. They have been determined partly through logical analysis and partly through experience. On the basis of logic, appreciation of environment could have been divided into two essentials, namely, the control of material resources and relationships to neighbors. Long experience and a deeper logic, however, strongly commend the union of the two into one essential. The third essential usually presented as the responsibilities of the home and the household is basically the transfer of the social heritage from generation to generation. Practical considerations recommend the centering of attention on the home, the agency primarily responsible for the heritage. The vital importance of religion as an essential of life impels many to urge it as a fifth essential. The unfortunate limitation of recreation to amusements and physical games emphatically support this thought. The interdependence and, indeed, the unity of re-creative processes require that they shall be combined into one essential. To avoid the usual limitation of recreation to amusements, it has been necessary to combine physical culture, intellectual development, and religious inspiration under the ideals of re-creation.

#### IV

#### Community Essentials and Social Organizations

Society functions through social organizations that may be classified into six groups, namely:

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|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Governmental  | 2. Economic          |
| 3. Educational   | 4. Religious         |
| 5. Philanthropic | 6. Art organizations |

The "essentials" are to be realized by these social organizations. The futility of many social surveys and programs is traceable to the disregard of the relation of these essentials to the social organizations. Educational and religious surveys and programs have been too exclusively concerned with school and church methods and machinery to the neglect of the sociological and economic backgrounds of education and religion. Political science has studied and recorded the various activities and departments of government without relating them effectively to general social conditions. Studies of commerce and industry, labor and capital have been so strictly economic as to omit an adequate appreciation of the human elements. Evaluation of art seems too often to be haughtily high-brow in its assumed superiority to the vital elements of human society. The corrective to these varied oversights of surveyors is that they shall base their studies of special organizations on a genuine understanding of the essentials of community life. Consciousness of community is the key to any effective survey of any social organization. This phrase should be adopted as the primary requisite of social surveyors. Nor is it safe to adopt this idea as an abstraction hovering dimly in the background.

transfer. But the responsibility rests primarily on the home and the household. Inquiry and observation increasingly show the status of women and children to be the best index to the process of transferring the tribal heritage. It seems elementally true that tribes and civilization cannot rise higher than their women. That "the female of the species is more deadly than the male" has a social value of tremendous significance in the earlier stages of human society. The instinct of the female to protect her young is the beginning of all the care necessary to the well-being of her children. Respect for womanhood is the recognition of the vital place of heredity in the evolutionary process. Herein is probably the most effective deterrent of sensuality and the abnormal emphasis on sex, namely, that society shall be led to realize the vital contribution of women to the heredity of the race. The third essential of primitive society is undoubtedly a proper regard for the home and the household, for women and children, as the agencies primarily responsible for the transfer of tribal capacities from one generation to another.

IV - Tribal life includes still another group of activities vital to their contentment and to their effectiveness. They are the processes of re-creation, too flippantly called recreations and dismissed as the non-essentials of life. If health is the foundation of existence, then re-creation is the cap-stone of both individual and social attainments. The range of tribal re-creations extend from physical play to mental games and spiritual yearnings for the unknown. Separate and distinct as the varying forms of re-creation may be, there is the unity so vividly asserted in St. Paul's words: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" To the primitive mind play, warfare, work, ceremonialism are naturally blended into sacrifice or service to the unseen spirits always at hand. Thus in their ignorance of the artificial distinctions of man-made philosophy and theology, they have instinctively adopted the basic thought of true religion implied by St. Paul. This, then, is the fourth essential of primitive life, that they always seek and provide for re-creations of body, mind, and spirit. However crude and even debasing the plays, the games, the ceremonialism, native people regard them as a necessary function of their life both now and in the hereafter.

### III

#### Essentials of Civilized Society

These, then, are the essentials of primitive society: (1) health and sanitation; (2) appreciation and use of environment, material and human; (3) effective development of the home and the household, the chief factors for the transfer of racial heritage; (4) the processes of re-creation - physical, mental, and spiritual. They are undoubtedly essentials of civilized society as well. The immense expenditures of money, energy, and devotion on each of them are ample evidence of their vital importance to civilization. They are the commonplaces of human existence and as such each essential with innumerable sub-divisions is taken for granted as the special job of experts and specialists. Rarely are they united in thought as interdependent parts underlying the whole of society.

This failure to recognize the interdependence of these essentials explains many strange and seemingly learned researches of the "causes and cure of civilization." Humanity has suffered much from endless propaganda whose futility is rooted in the blind disregard of the unity of society. Knowledge has been divided into "grotesque fragments" utterly foreign to life, both individual and social. In their devotion to their hobbies, fanatics have oppressed and persecuted mankind. In their search for truth, scientists have often overlooked the universe of which they and their researches are a part and have buried themselves in the darkness of their laboratory dungeons. Hyper-specialization is almost as dangerous to truth as sweeping generalization. This is especially the case in any attempt to differentiate the basic elements of civilization.

saying: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give to you re-creation."

As the essentials of civilization are primarily social facts, the approach of the present study is sociological. Such an approach seems especially opportune and vitally needed to help solve the present uncertainty of religious organizations in their relations to the tremendous social changes that have occurred during the nineteenth century and still more actively during the first quarter of the twentieth century. "Sociologians" have for some decades been expounding social dogmas based on deductive abstractions, and "sociologizers" are now especially active in the preaching of fads. Both have tended to discredit sound sociological study based on facts carefully assembled and tested by the method of "learning by doing." The four essentials of civilization are as basic to churches as they are to all other forms of social organizations.

In religious terms their spiritual significance to humanity may be expressed as follows:

1. An impelling consciousness of God and Humanity as the basic and comprehensive essential to all Christian service.
2. The spiritual significance of health. A conscious belief that the "body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."
3. Consciousness of the interdependence of economic welfare and the brotherhood of man especially in the relationships of rural and urban peoples. Economic welfare can be fully achieved only as we realize that we are co-workers with God in all economic activities.
4. Interracial and intergroup cooperation as the realization of Christian brotherhood.
5. Womanhood and the home as the guardians of human and especially the Christian heritage.
6. Re-creation--physical, mental and spiritual. The divine re-creating of life from the continuous renovation of the blood to the revitalizing consciousness of Divinity.

In view of the ever-increasing control of social processes by urban standards and ideals, it is emphatically important to recognize the vital contributions of rural communities, always the primary sources of population and the guardians of the Holy Earth.

These are the working convictions which will remake Governments, Economic Organizations, Schools, Philanthropy, the Cultural Societies and especially the Christian churches. It is a comprehensive program but it is as simple in its application as all the great verities of Humanity and Divinity.

Our theological seminaries, our universities and our programs are clouded by too many abstractions, often by too many "isms." "Blessed are the meek" who have the humility to see and to name and to depend upon the elementals of Divine inspiration and the daily needs of mankind.